

Outline for Assessment and Accountability Plans





Publishing Information

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Contents

Introduction	vii
Elements of the Plan	1
Assessment Component	1
Accountability Component	3
Goals and Indicators	4
Data and the Collection Process	5
Reports to Parents and the Public	8
Interpretation and Use	9
Golden Poppy Unified: A Model for Planners	10
District Profile	10
Golden Poppy's Plan	11
Challenge Objectives	11
The Challenge Assessment and Accountability System:	
A Conceptual Framework	11
The Plan for Implementation of the System	14
The Short-Term Component: The New System	
in Mathematics and Language Arts	15
The Long-Term Component: Expansion, Coordination,	
and Improvement	18
Appendixes	
Appendix A: Methodology for Combining Scores	
(With Up to Four Measures Available)	23
Appendix B: Schedule of Implementation of Challenge	
Assessment in Mathematics and Language Arts	
with Multiple Measures	25
Appendix C: Challenge School Performance Summary:	
Percentages of Students Meeting and/or Exceeding	
Standards by School	26
Appendix D: Meeting the Challenge: Percentage of 1997	
Graduating Seniors Who Have Met the Challenge	
High School Diploma Requirements	27

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Introduction

The Challenge calls for us all—students, parents, educators, and communities—to embrace a simple but powerful concept: that we measure success by gains in student achievement based on standards.

—Delaine Eastin
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

By October 1 of each year, Challenge Districts are to submit to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction plans for their assessment and accountability systems. Although assessment and accountability are closely related, they are discussed separately in this document in order to emphasize the importance of each. Assessment is at the heart of the Challenge Initiative, providing crucial information about the extent to which students are achieving, that is, are meeting the new rigorous content and performance standards. Although the first purpose of assessment is to improve classroom instruction, this document emphasizes the summarization of individual student results into school-level results—the point where assessment blends into accountability.

The establishment of an accountability system is the answer to the main question asked by the public: “Are things getting better?” Its establishment also leads to questioning how the results will be used, how program weaknesses will be addressed, and who will be involved in the process. Unlike the assessment process, an accountability system considers several factors in addition to achievement; it deals with the overall data collection, analysis, and reporting processes.

Part I of this outline describes the basic requirements of the assessment and accountability plans that districts are to submit to the Department of Education. Part II provides a discretionary model, an example of a plan devised

for Golden Poppy Unified, a fictitious school district. Each district's plan is to have a short-range component and a long-range component. The short-range part of the plan will indicate specifically the information that will be collected in 1996-97 and 1997-98. The long-range part will show how the assessment and accountability systems are expected to change as they are developed and refined over the years.